

2019

That Day

the day the snow fell hard like white rain
the day the jays
devoured the suet in the green cage dangling
from the back fence
the day the yard filled with cowbirds, martins and grackles
the day I watched the red-headed woodpecker
without a mate
fly from fence to dead peach
where he pecked away
thrusting head from side to side, then hammered
beak against branch — this
the day I found my dog of twenty years dead
on the bare oak floor, positioned
to guard
the front door

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2020

Covid-19, Lewes, Delaware 2020

Three weeks in, I leave the house,
drive to town, mail taxes, get curbside pickup,
take the finest table on an abandoned deck
overlooking the canal —
have a delicious meal
alone, except for one cormorant
perched on a piling, preening,
scarcely a sound —
a few cars clattering over the drawbridge, the occasional buzz
of a circular saw, hammering from across the wakeless water —
a kayaker glides by
reminding me of the quiet, ungentrified fishing town I knew
forty years ago, when no one
strolled stiffly down Second Street
wearing a surgical mask and latex gloves,
when no two women wearing similar protective gear waked and talked —
one from the sidewalk — one from the street
keeping a steady, invisibly measured
six feet
of fear
between them.

November 2018

When The Man Is Away, The Wife Can Return to Herself

and when she returns
our mom sits in the man's recliner, pulls back the lever
and relaxes

and we kids
come out of hiding
ask if she'll read to us, or sometimes she offers

my brothers and I lounge on the living room floor
as page by page our mom takes us rafting down the river, or galloping away
on mighty stallions

and sometimes
we go to places of deep sorrow
where we cry

and when she bakes her bread on Tuesdays — magic
a bit of yeast, sugar, warm water, fifteen pounds of Robin Hood flour
mixed, kneaded, punched down, placed into greased tins

turned out, loaf after loaf steaming on every countertop —
our mom
the contented baker

like in the childhood picture where she wears a long white apron
puffy white hat, wooden spoon in hand, the biggest smile —
the girl who does not know her future

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2019

After Her Day Job, Miss Betsy Returns Home

carries bags of groceries into her house & then it's out
to her gardens to weed & hoe, to cut away tangled growth

to water & mulch—her hands, arms, back & legs working
like a crew of four & from my yard I'm sure I can hear

Miss Betsy's weeds murmur & quake as she comes near
with shovel & rake, sickle & saw—Miss Betsy's gardens

thriving under her instructive ways, producing lush arrays
of florals & figs—widowed & not so young, alone, this one

gritty woman gets the job done & still each morning—
to work by five—back by three—groceries into the house—

and then—another day of reckoning for her soon to be
blubbery, whimpering weeds

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2019

Fish Shapes Like Kites Caught in Black Branches

after Ocean Dreams by Jessie Monaco

so colorful, so surprising
they remind me of Paul Klee
and bits

of poetry
remind me of memories
like bubbles

so brief
so fluid most swim or drift
away, but these

will stay, these
will not dull
or yellow with age

oh, for bits of fond memory
forever caught
in black branches of tree

first appeared in Scenes a Collaboration of Coastal Writers & Artists

